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Massachusetts

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Legislating for Workers

Chapter 263.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.

In the year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty-seven.

AN ACT to make the first Monday of September, known as Labor's Holiday, a legal holiday.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows. Section 1. The first Monday of September in each year, being the day celebrated and known as Labor's Holiday, is hereby made a legal public holiday, to all intents and purposes, in the same manner as Thanksgiving, Fast and Christmas days, the twenty-second of February, the thirtieth day of May and the fourth day of July, are now by law made public holidays. Section 2. This act shall have effect upon its passage.

Passed to be enacted.

House of Representatives, May 6 1887
John A. Doyle Speaker

Passed to be enacted.

Senate, May 11 1887
William J. Boardman President

May 11 1887

Approved. Oliver Ames

Acts, 1877, Chapter 263, an act "to make the first Monday of September, known as Labor's Holiday, a legal Holiday."



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Passed to be enacted.

House of Representatives, May 6 1887
Wm. D. Hoyle Speaker

Passed to be enacted.

Senate, May 18 1887
Henry J. Boardman President

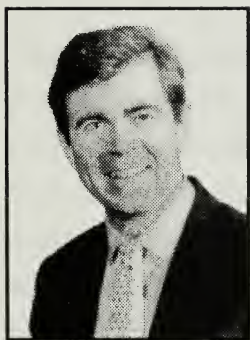
May 11 1887

Approved Oliver Ames

Acts, 1877, Chapter 263, an act "to make the first Monday of September, known as Labor's Holiday, a legal Holiday."

Mississippi

The state of Mississippi is located in the southern United States. It is bordered by Alabama to the north, Louisiana to the west, and the Gulf of Mexico to the south. The state is known for its rich history and culture, including its role in the American Civil War and the civil rights movement. The state's economy is primarily based on agriculture, with cotton and soybeans being major crops. The state also has a significant service sector, including tourism and healthcare. The state's capital is Jackson, and its largest city is Memphis. The state is home to a diverse population, with a mix of African American, white, and Hispanic residents. The state's climate is humid subtropical, with hot summers and mild winters. The state is also known for its beautiful scenery, including the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. The state's history is filled with interesting events, including the founding of the state and the civil rights movement. The state's culture is a blend of African American, white, and Hispanic influences. The state's economy is diverse, with a mix of agriculture, service, and manufacturing. The state's population is growing, and the state is becoming more diverse. The state's future is bright, with many opportunities for growth and development.



Many things that we take for granted today—paid vacations, pensions, health insurance, sick leave—were not always workers' rights. Massachusetts and its labor organizations have led the way in protecting working men and women.

From an act signed on June 13, 1822, incorporating the Associated Housewrights in Boston, to legislation protecting women working in mills, to minimum wage laws, Massachusetts has a proud history of providing services and protections to its workers.

As we enter a new millennium it is appropriate to look back at that history as we plan for even greater accomplishments in the future. Please join me in honoring the men and women who keep our Commonwealth running.

The legislation shown in this booklet, as well as other historical and genealogical sources, are available for study in the Massachusetts Archives.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William Francis Galvin". The ink is dark, and the signature is fluid and legible.

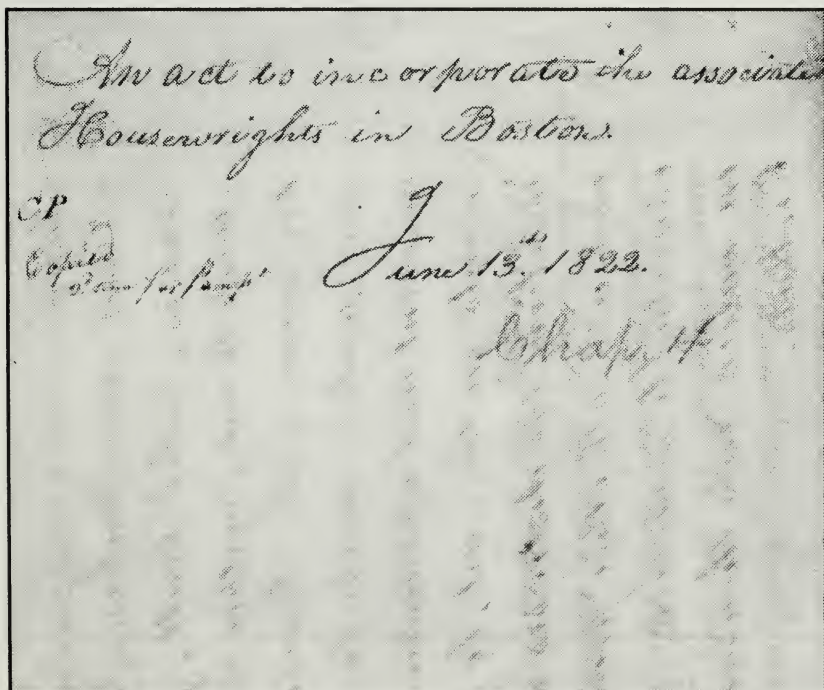
William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth



The 1820s

Labor begins to organize

Among the earliest labor organizations in Massachusetts were the Associated Housewrights in Boston (1822) and the Columbian Charitable Society of Shipwrights and Caulkers of Boston and Charlestown (1823). These first “labor unions,” made up primarily of skilled workers in the building trades, were concerned largely with measures of mutual aid and protection, such as to assist “mechanics with loans of money, and to relieve the distresses of unfortunate mechanics, and their families.” Soon, however, the workers began to use strikes to seek higher wages and shorter working hours.

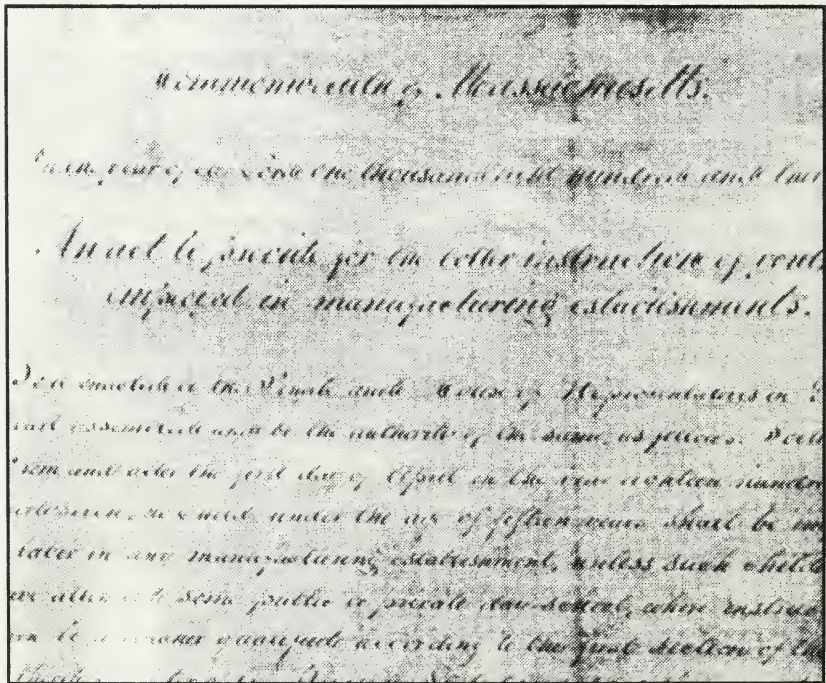


June 13, 1822, Chapter 4 – An Act to incorporate the Associated Housewrights in Boston

The 1830s

The factory system and child labor

The development of factories in the new industrial cities, such as Lowell, Lynn, and Pittsfield, revolutionized the patterns of work for many people. Along with young women, many children began working in factories. Reformers responded by stressing the need for free public education for children, in the belief that formal education would lift the children of the working class out of poverty. The General Court passed several acts regarding the schooling of children who worked in manufacturing establishments.



April 16, 1836, Chapter CCXLV – An Act to provide for the better Instruction of Youth employed in Manufacturing Establishments

The 1840s

Labor's official recognition: Commonwealth vs. Hunt

Despite early charters granted by the General Court to a few labor organizations, the judiciary viewed unions as unlawful institutions. The case of Commonwealth vs. Hunt, argued by liberal reformer Robert Rantoul on behalf of the Boston Society of Journeymen Bootmakers, established the principle that workers had the legal right to organize. Furthermore, Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw's decision stated that workers had the right to strike as long as they did it peaceably and did not violate any contracts.

*Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Suffolk ss.*

*At the Municipal Court of
the City of Boston, begun and
holden at said Boston, within
and for the County of Suffolk, on
the first Monday of October in
the year of our Lord, eighteen
hundred and forty*

*The Jurors for the Common-
wealth of Massachusetts, on
their oath present, That, John
Hunt, Patrick Hays & Daniel
O'Neal, Supplis Woods, Michael*

Decision from Commonwealth vs. Hunt (Supreme Judicial Court Archives)

The 1840s

The fight for a ten-hour day

Throughout the 1840s and 1850s labor unions continued to push for better working conditions. Workers inundated the General Court with petitions seeking to reduce the number of working hours to ten per day. Most manufacturing establishments operated from sunrise to sunset, so that hours of labor varied, ranging from eleven in the winter to nearly fourteen in the summer. General Court committees considered critical legislation on the hours of labor in 1845, 1850, 1855, 1866, and 1867. It was not until 1874, however, that legislation was passed that effectively limited the hours of work for women and children in manufacturing establishments.

*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives
in General Court assembled.*

WE, the undersigned Petitioners, respectfully represent, that we are Mechanics, Artisans, and Laborers, employed by the several Manufacturing Companies in *Chicopee Mass* That while we recognize and acknowledge, to the fullest extent, our obligations to render a full equivalent, in labor for our wages, at the same time, we feel that we are entitled to the same amount of rest and recreation as is afforded by the general law of the State, and to the same amount of time to devote to the care of their families and to the duties of our common humanity. To secure a reasonable portion of time in which to perform these sacred, social and domestic duties, and to work out, to live out, our mission not simply as machines of labor, but as living, thinking, sensitive Men. We pray, that the Legislature will establish by law the number of hours of Labor which shall be held and taken as the legal measure of a day's work. And in view of our responsibilities as well to ourselves as to our employers; of their rights and of ours; of the value of life, health and intelligence, as well as the profits of labor; we

| NAMES | NAMES |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| William Barnes | Elmer Bacon |
| J. M. [unclear] | [unclear] |
| [unclear] | [unclear] |
| Commissioners | J. H. Stevens |
| Chas. Wolcott | H. C. Ball |
| J. R. Bliss | David Northburn |

Chicopee Mill Workers Petition (1854 H3747/20)

The 1860s

The commissions of the hours of labor

Responding to widely endorsed petitions calling for a reduction in the hours of labor, the General Court authorized commissions in 1865 and 1866 to investigate the subject, "especially in its relations to the social, educational, and sanitary condition of the working classes, and to the permanent prosperity of the productive industry of the state." Stressing that most people already worked a ten-hour day, some petitioners actually requested that the legislature establish an eight-hour day.



Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

No. 10 STATE HOUSE,

Boston, October 3, 1866.

DEAR SIR,

The Commissioners on the Hours of Labor, appointed by the Governor, under a resolve of the Legislature of 1866, chap. 92, "*with power to send for persons and papers, to investigate the subject of the Hours of Labor, especially in its relations to the social, educational, and sanitary condition of the industrial classes, and the permanent prosperity of the productive industry of the State,*" are desirous of collecting information in relation to the matter referred to them; and for this purpose, respectfully request that you will furnish answers to the following inquiries, or any portion of them, and if possible, by the first of November next.

1. How many persons are employed in your works?

132

2. How many are females?

41

3. How many are under the age of ten years?

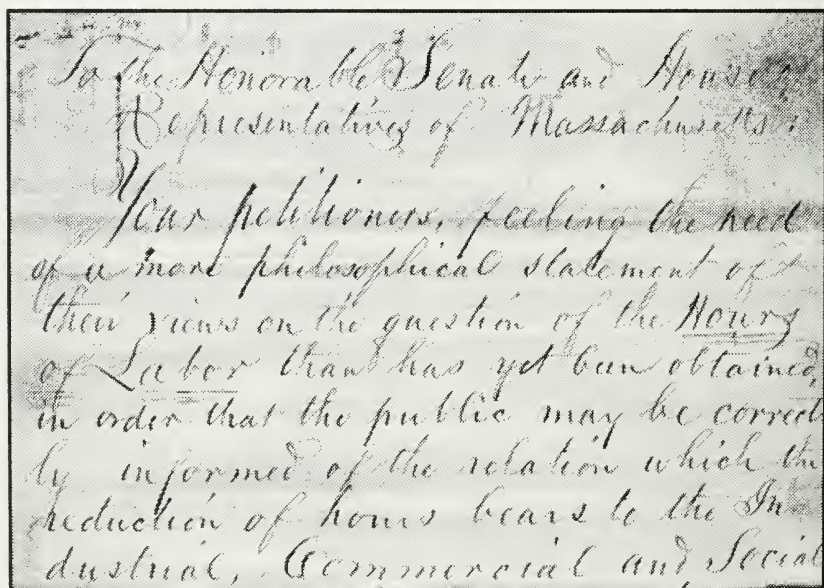
None

Survey received by the Commission on the Hours of Labor,
1866

The 1860s

The Knights of St. Crispin and the state Bureau of Statistics of Labor

Despite the substantial reports of the two commissions on the hours of labor in 1865 and 1866, the General Court took no action. But another surge of legislative petitions followed the 1867 formation of the Order of the Knights of St. Crispin, an organization of skilled mechanics. Their demands, along with those of labor reformers such as Wendell Phillips, led to the creation in 1869 of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor, the first such body in the United States. The bureau was required to collect "statistical details relating to all departments of labor in the Commonwealth, especially in its relations to the commercial, industrial, social, educational, and sanitary conditions of the laboring classes...."



To the Honorable Senate and House of
Representatives of Massachusetts
Your petitioners, feeling the need
of a more philosophical statement of
their views on the question of the Hours
of Labor than has yet been obtained,
in order that the public may be correct-
ly informed of the relation which the
reduction of hours bears to the In-
dustrial, Commercial and Social

Petition of Wendell Phillips and others, Original papers, 1869
Resolves c102

The 1870s

Achieving the ten-hour day

Gov. William B. Washburn, in his 1874 inaugural address, considered the arguments for the ten-hour day for operatives of manufacturing establishments and concluded, “the limit of a day’s work to three-fourths of the laboring class in this Commonwealth being ten hours, I am not able to see that any great detriment would result if the same limit should be extended to the other fourth.” Following the governor’s lead, the General Court, after bitter debate, finally enacted an effective ten-hour law for women and children. The efforts of organized labor and reports generated by the state Bureau of Statistics of Labor provided persuasive reasoning to support the legislation.

Chap. 221.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.

In the year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Seventy-Four.

AN ACT to regulate the hours of labor in Manufacturing Establishments.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows: Section 1. No minor under the age of eighteen years, and no woman over that age, shall be employed in laboring by any person, firm or corporation in any manufacturing establishment in this Commonwealth more than ten hours in any one day, except when it is necessary to make repairs to prevent the stoppage or interruption of the ordinary running of the machinery. provided however, that a different apportionment of the hours of labor may be made for the sole purpose of giving a shorter day's work

1874 Chapter 221 – An Act to Regulate the Hours of Labor in Manufacturing Establishments

The 1880s

Labor legislation and the Knights of Labor

The rapid growth of the Knights of Labor in the mid-1880s resulted in renewed agitation for changes in labor laws. Robert Howard, head of the statewide Knights of Labor District 30, provided legislative leadership during his eight terms as a state senator. Between 1886 and 1888 the General Court enacted thirty-six laws relating to labor issues. This burst of legislative activity included the creation of the State Board of Arbitration and Conciliation (1886); provision for the payment of wages on a weekly basis (1886); establishment of Labor Day as a legal holiday (1887); imposition of factory safeguards (1887); and authorization for the incorporation of trade and labor organizations (1888).

Chapter 134

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.

In the year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty-eight.

AN ACT *to authorize the incorporation of labor or trade organizations.*

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows: Section 1. Seven or more persons within this Commonwealth, who associate themselves together by such an agreement in writing, as is described in section three of chapter one hundred and fifteen of the Public Statutes, with the intention of forming a corporation for the purpose of improving in any lawful manner the condition of any employee in any one or more lawful trades or employments, either in respect to their employment, or by the promotion of educational, temperance, morality or social intercourse, by the payment of benefits to members who

Acts 1888, Chapter 134, to authorize the incorporation of Labor or Trade organizations

The 1910s

The need for a minimum wage

In 1911, representatives of the National Consumers' League, the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, and the Boston Women's Trade Union League sponsored legislation to study the wages of women and minors. Drawing on similar British legislation, the idea of a minimum wage was a new concept that took into account the needs of the employee instead of the costs to the employer. Following an investigation of women working in the cotton industry, confectionery factories, retail stores, and laundries, minimum wage legislation was passed in 1912. Similar legislation covering the wages of men was not enacted until 1947.

section to publish the findings, decrees or notices of the commission at its regular rates for the space taken shall, upon conviction thereof, be punished by a fine of not less than one hundred dollars for each offence. SECTION 16. No member of the commission and no newspaper publisher, printer, editor or employee thereof, shall be liable to an action for damages for publishing the name of any employer in accordance with the provisions of this act, unless such publication contains wilful misrepresentation. SECTION 17. The commission shall, annually, on or before the first Wednesday in January, make a report to the general court of its investigations and proceedings during the preceding year. SECTION 18. This act shall take effect on the first day of July in the year nineteen hundred and thirteen.

House of Representatives, May 29 1912.

Passed to be enacted,

Ernest B. Cushman

Speaker

In Senate, May 29 1912

Passed to be enacted,

Lucas H. Greenup

President

June 4 1912.

Approved.

Ernest B. Cushman

Acts 1912, Chapter 706, an act to establish a commission for minimum wage and to provide for the determination of minimum wage for women and minors.

The 1930s

The Depression years

The shoe and textile industries in Massachusetts began to feel the effects of overproduction and increased competition by the early 1920s, with the result that the industrial work force shrank from 695,000 in 1920 to 481,000 in 1930. As the effects of the Depression deepened, other industries were affected. By 1934, one quarter of the workforce was unemployed, and sixty percent of those workers had been unemployed for at least a year. Local and state governments supported residents to the best of their ability, but the federal government under Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal had the greatest effect. The National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, which established minimum wages, limited hours, and the right to organize, brought a renewed spirit of militancy to the unions.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

In the Year One Thousand Nine Hundred and Thirty-three

AN ACT making Appropriations for the Employment of Additional Persons as a Measure of Relief during the Present Unemployment Emergency.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows: **SECTION 1.** To provide for the employment of additional labor and other personal services as a measure of relief during the present emergency caused by unemployment, the sums set forth in section two, for the several purposes and subject to the conditions therein specified, are hereby appropriated from the general fund or revenue of the commonwealth unless some other source of revenue is expressed, subject to the provisions of law regulating the disbursement of public funds and the approval thereof. **SECTION 2.** *Service of the Department of Conservation.* Item A For thinning trees and otherwise improving state forest lands owned by the commonwealth, a sum not exceeding seventy-five thousand dollars, \$75,000. *Service of the Department of Agriculture.* Item B For carrying out mosquito control projects in accordance with the provisions of chapter one hundred and twelve of the acts of nineteen hundred and thirty-one, erect

The 1990s

The many faces of modern labor unions

Acts 1933, Chapter 89 – Appropriations for Employment of Additional Persons

In recent decades, labor unions have responded to great changes in the Massachusetts economy. Traditional manufacturing jobs, in industries such as textiles and shoes, have left the state, being replaced by jobs in areas such as finance and technology. The rise of multinational corporations has meant that products previously produced in Massachusetts are now often manufactured in Central America, the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia, where wages are lower and regulations looser. Unions have new issues on which to focus, including the representation of growing numbers of women and minority workers, and community-based concerns such as the fight for the living wage.



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

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